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Vegetables • Cane • Sod • Rice • Trees

SEPTEMBER 27, 2005

*Farm Bill
Forum Days*

FARM BILL LISTENING SESSION
FFVA CONVENTION
CHAMPIONSGATE, FLORIDA

THE HONORABLE MIKE JOHANNIS
SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
THE HONORABLE CHARLES BRONSON
FLORIDA COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE

DEAR SIR:

MY NAME IS RICK ROTH OF ROTH FARMS. I AM A THIRD GENERATION FARMER IN BELLE GLADE, FLORIDA. I HAVE SERVED ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF FFVA, SINCE BECOMING THE HEAD OF OUR FAMILY FARM OPERATION IN 1986. WE PRODUCE LETTUCE, RADISHES, SUGAR CANE, TURF GRASS, RICE, SWEET CORN, GREEN BEANS, AND NURSERY TREES ON OVER 5,000 ACRES IN THE EVERGLADES AGRICULTURAL AREA(EAA).

ROTH FARMS IS THE MOST DIVERSIFIED FARM OPERATION IN THE EAA AND WE HAVE BEEN VERY PROGRESSIVE IN IMPLEMENTING BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES. YES, WE PARTICIPATED IN THE EQUIP PROGRAM IN THE LATE 1990'S. I DARE SAY THAT OUR FARM IS THE ONE TO VISIT TO SEE FIRST HAND HOW FARMERS ARE REDUCING PHOSPHOROUS CONCENTRATIONS IN STORMWATER RUNOFF THAT EVENTUALLY MAKES ITS WAY DOWN TO EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK.

AS A MATTER OF FACT, A WEEK AGO YESTERDAY, YOUR NEW DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY AND MENTOR MERLYN CARLSON TOURED OUR FARM.

TODAY I AM ADRESSING YOU AS A STATE DIRECTOR, SITTING ON THE BOARD OF FLORIDA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION SINCE 1997.

MY FARM BUREAU DISTRICT IS NUMBER 1 IN THE PRODUCTION OF SWEET CORN, RADISHES, ORANGES, AND SUGAR IN THE UNITED STATES. WITH ALL THE BLESSINGS THAT COME FROM FARMING IN SOUTH CENTRAL FLORIDA, ALSO COMES THE EXTRA REGULATORY COSTS FROM FARMING NEAR POPULATION CENTERS AND SENSITIVE ECOSYSTEMS. ON OUR MAIN FARM, WE PAY AN ADDITIONAL \$68 PER ACRE IN PROPERTY TAXES DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS.

WE REALIZE THAT BUDGET CONSTRAINTS AND HURRICANE RELIEF FOR THE GULF COAST WILL HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT ON FUNDING PROGRAMS IN THE 2007 FARM BILL.

HERE IS MY REQUEST.

- 1) INCREASE FUNDING FOR EQUIP AND OTHER CONSERVATION PROGRAMS. SET UP INCENTIVES TO HELP ALL FARMERS REGARDLESS OF SIZE PROTECT THE RESOURCE, OFFSET ENVIRONMENTAL COSTS, AND REMAIN COMPETITIVE
- 2) ~~ADMINISTER ALL FARM PROGRAMS UNDER USDA~~ WITHOUT PREJUDICE. REMEMBER THE FUTURE OF RURAL AMERICA IS DEPENDENT UPON A STRONG AND DIVERSE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY.
- 3) CITRUS GROWERS IN FLORIDA ARE TAKING OUT TREES EXPOSED TO CITRUS CANCER. THEY APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT. SEND THE COMPENSATION CHECKS. THIS IS AN INVESTMENT IN A SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY IN FLORIDA.
- 4) THE RENEWABLE ENERGY PROVISIONS IN THE RECENT ENERGY BILL ARE A GOOD START. WE NEED ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO PRODUCE ETHANOL NOW.
- 5) GIVE THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY THE TOP PRIORITY FOR FUEL TO PREVENT CROP DISRUPTIONS.

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THANK YOU, SECRETARY FOR COMING TO THE GREAT STATE OF FLORIDA.

SINCERELY,

RICK ROTH
PRESIDENT
ROTH FARMS, INC.
VICE-PRESIDENT
FLORIDA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION